

177-179 Neilson Street (Commercial Building)
New Brunswick
Middlesex County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-904

HABS
NJ,
12-NEBRU,
19-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

177-179 NEILSON STREET (Commercial Building)

HABS No. NJ-904

HABS
NJ,
12-NEBRU,
19-

Location: 177-179 Neilson Street, northeast corner of intersection of Hiram Street, New Brunswick, Middlesex County, New Jersey

Present Owner: Housing Authority of the City of New Brunswick

Present Occupant: The Thrift Shop

Present Use: Commercial retail store first floor; residential second and third floors

Statement of Significance: A post-Civil War apartment house with commercial first floor space. It was built after the time of the shift in buildings in the Hiram Market area from smaller frame and clapboard sided houses and stores to larger and higher brick structures.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which this building was built. The site is Block 6, lot 5, on the Tax Map of 1980 in the Engineer's Office, New Brunswick City Hall. References are to the Record Office, Middlesex County Court House, New Brunswick.

1982 Deed, January 14, recorded January 25, in Deed Book 3223, page 398.
To Housing Authority of the City of New Brunswick
by Declaration of Taking of Superior Court of
New Jersey, Law Division, Docket No. L26031-81.
From Zoltan I. Toth
For \$117,500.

1979 Deed, July 20, recorded in Deed Book 3100, page 23.
To Camill Pentze and Zoltan I. Toth
From Max Furchheimer and Esther, his wife
For 177-179 Neilson Street, lot 40' x 51.10',
\$85,000.

1945 Deed, September 1, recorded in Deed Book 1283, page 473.
To Max Furchheimer et ux
From Eastmanton Corporation
(holdings of National Grape Corp. deeded to
Eastmanton Corp. 5/29/43, recorded in Book 1239,

page 149; name Kapmaur Corp. changed to National Grape Corp. 4/16/43; New Brunswick Housing Corporation to Kapmaur Corp. 5/27/42, Book 1217, page 301; name Levin Investment Corp. changed to New Brunswick Housing Corp. 2/26/41.)

- 1937 Deed, August 27, recorded in Deed Book 1120, page 37.
To Levin Investment Company
From The Second People's Building Loan Association of New Brunswick
Subject to lease to Tofik K. Shamy, expires January 31, 1940.
- 1936 Deed, December 22, recorded in Deed Book 1105, page 315.
To The Second People's Building Loan Association
From Bessie Smigel et vir et al [Morris, her husband], and Sarah and Charles Wasserberg
Includes other property in New Brunswick.
- 1930 Deed, December 22, recorded in Deed Book 1004, page 473.
To Bessie Smigel, et al
From Morris Levin et ux
Includes a total of 12 tracts.
- 1920 Deed, July 15, recorded in Deed Book 679, page 161.
To Morris Levin
From Ellen V. Burrows, widow, et al
Subject to mortgage held by Margaret G. Runyon.
Ellen V. Burrows' first marriage to Jephtha D. Runyon, deceased 1872.
Ellen V. Burrows' second marriage to Waters Burrows, deceased.
- 1868 Deed, May 11, recorded in Deed Book 111, page 296.
To Jephtha S. Runyon
From: Peter A. Van Deventer et ux
- 1849 Deed, April 25, recorded in Deed Book 49, page 303.
To Peter A. Van Deventer
From Ann F. Perrine
- 1848 Deed, August 16, recorded in Deed Book 48, page 22.
To Ann F. Perrine, widow of Dr. Henry Perrine
From James S. Green
Lot of land and house.

- 1842 Deed, January 10, recorded in Deed Book 36, page 612.
To James S. Green
From Dr. Charles Smith
- 1837 Deed, May 22, recorded in Deed Book 32, page 227.
To Dr. Charles Smith
From Peter Perrine, deceased, and Sarah Perrine, his wife, deceased, by Chancery Court decree sold at public auction, for \$2,990.
- 1809 Deed, May 1, recorded in Deed Book 7, page 762.
To Peter Perrine
From Executors of John Dennis, deceased, for \$400.
All that certain lot of land situate on east side of Queen [Neilson] Street at north side Hiram Street and east side Queen [Neilson] Street at intersection - thence running along Queen [Neilson] Street 40 feet, east and parallel to Hiram Street 100 feet, thence south and parallel to Queen [Neilson] Street 40 feet to said Hiram Street, thence west along Hiram Street 100 feet to the beginning.
2. Date of erection: Unknown. Sanborn Map of 1886 indicates present building. It could have been built by Jeptha S. Runyon between 1868 and before his death in 1872. Inventory of Runyon's estate (recorded in Inventory Book M, page 237) lists store fixtures and debts due Runyon and Bro. Stylistically, it appears to be somewhat later and therefore possibly built by Runyon's widow, Ellen, who married Waters Burrows. This building probably replaced the house mentioned in the deed of 1848 from James S. Green to Ann F. Perrine, which may have been built by Peter Perrine on the lot he acquired from John Dennis, who owned a great deal of the land in the Hiram Street area in the early 1800's.
3. Architect, builder, contractor, or suppliers: Unknown.
4. Original plan and construction: None known. Examination of the building indicates little substantive change from the original construction. The first floor is divided into three retail areas; one with its door on Neilson Street that may have been an apartment earlier; one with its door on Hiram Street at the Neilson Street end; and one with its door in the next to last bay east on Hiram Street. The second and third floors were designed

with two apartments on each floor with access to a central front staircase and to a rear open staircase. A light well penetrated the center of each apartment also. Each apartment had a front room divided from a back room or parlor by an architectural feature of a knee-high wall supporting a column framing the central opening from the front to the back room. Photograph of 1901 in New Jersey Collection shows dark colored shutters on second and third floor windows, a show window on first floor, and single bracketed Italianate cornice.

5. Alterations and additions: After 1951, the bracketed cornice was covered with aluminum and the east door on Hiram Street was blocked when the first floor facade was covered with porcelain-finish panels.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

There are no outstanding persons or events associated with this building. Reference to some of the owners can be found on early maps and in city directories. Both the Perrine family and the Runyon family settled in New Brunswick in the 18th century. The site is across Neilson Street from the Dutch Reformed Church, constructed in 1812, and across Hiram Street from the Market House constructed in 1812-13 and demolished in 1862. Peter Perrine had a cut nail factory on the site about this time, according to John P. Wall, Chronicles of New Brunswick, p. 297. By 1855, Peter A. Van Deventer was advertising in the City Directory of that year "Cheap Grocery and Provision Store, cor. Neilson & Hiram Sts., (near the market,)." The 1877-78 City Directory lists J.D. Runyon under Groceries, Flour and Feed Stores at corner of Hiram and Neilson.

The building is included in the Hiram Market Historic District, a district eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Photographs, New Brunswick Vertical File Photographic Collection, New Jersey Room, Alexander Library, Rutgers University, College Avenue, New Brunswick, N.J. Views of Neilson and Hiram Streets, 1901, 1936, 1951.

"Plan of New Brunswick," by J.W. Otley and J. Kelly, published by Lloyd Van Derveer, Camden, N.J. 1850. Shows a building on the site of 177 Neilson Street marked "P.V. Van Deventer."

Map of 1861, H.F. Walling, published by Smith, Gallup & Co., New York City. Shows building on site of 177 Neilson Street.

Maps of 1886, 1892, 1897, 1904, Sanborn Insurance Company, in the collection of the Map and Geography Division, Library of Congress.

2. Bibliography

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Hiram Market Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form, prepared by Donald Stryker and David Myskins, Historic Hiram Market Preservation Association, 7 Bayard Street, New Brunswick, N.J., October 10, 1978.

b. Secondary and published sources:

A Directory of the City of New Brunswick for 1855, published by John Terhune, 31 Albany St., New Brunswick, 1855.

New Brunswick City Directory, 1886-87, in Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

New Brunswick Directory, 1877-78, published by Babcock and Johnson, in Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Nineteenth century newspapers published in New Brunswick that might include advertisements of auction in 1837 and of businesses housed in the building. Additional information should be searched for regarding any fire or demolition of the earlier structure.

Prepared by Constance Werner Ramirez
Preservation Resource Group, Inc.
Springfield, VA 22151
March 1982

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Fine mid-Victorian store and apartments.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 40' front x 51' side. Five-bay front; 5-bay side.
2. Foundations: Not visible.
3. Wall construction: Red brick, hard, smooth finish, laid in stretcher bond. First floor now covered with light blue porcelain-finish panels. Large horizontal signs above first floor door heads, post-1951 vertical hanging neon sign on front through second and third floors, trace of painted sign on side at left-hand corner, all labeled "The Thrift Shop."
4. Framing: Brick walls, wood framing.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: None.
6. Chimneys: 1 plain, tall chimney, left center.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Front: 2 doors, center, 6-light door, one panel below, plain frame and transom; left: modern, all-glass, aluminum shop door, iron folding grate over it.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Second and third floors, front and sides, have doublehung wood sash, 2/4 lights, plus modern aluminum storm sash, plain stone lintels and sills. Front, first floor: 2 sets of shop windows with folding sheet grating, all modern, no architectural interest. No windows first floor, side, although 1951 photo shows former shop windows on side and evidence of 1 double hung window. No evidence of shutters.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Flat roof.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Plain, modern, aluminum cornice appears to have been installed over original Victorian cornice shown in 1951 photo. Earlier cornice is a simple, bracketed cornice, deeply projecting, with deep fascia, simple molded crown. One skylight rear, and 1 bulkhead for stair.

C. Description of Interior: First floor plan: 3 stores, light well, stairs at rear.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Urban streetfront, corner setting.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: None.
5. Landscaping: None, built to street, sidewalk line.

Prepared by James C. Massey
Maxwell-Massey Associates
Alexandria, VA 22314
March 1982

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation made during 1981-82 by Preservation Resource Group, Inc. for the Hiram Market Committee in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Officer, and the City of New Brunswick of February 20, 1980.

The project was under the general supervision of Constance Werner Ramirez, President, Preservation Resource Group, Inc., 5619 Southamptton Drive, Springfield, Virginia 22151. Historical material was prepared by Dr. Ramirez. The architectural information was prepared by James C. Massey, Maxwell-Massey Associates, 614 S. Lee Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Photographs were taken by Ronald N. Anderson, 8750 Gerogia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.